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C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 01 OF 02 NAIROBI 002086

SIPDIS

DEPT FOR AF/E

E.O. 12958: DECL: 10/01/2019

TAGS: PGOV PREL PTER MOPS SO

SUBJECT: SOMALIA - BATTLE FOR KISMAYO LIKELY TO CONTINUE;
PRESENTS TFG WITH OPPORTUNITY

REF: NAIROBI 2042

Classified By: Somalia Unit Counselor Bob Patterson for reasons 1.4 (b, d).

¶1. (C) Summary: On the morning of October 1, heavy fighting broke out between Ahmed Madobe's Darod/Kabalah alliance and al-Shabaab militia in Kismayo (reftel). Fighting began about 7 a.m. (local) in the northern part of the city but eventually spread to other parts of the town. Our contacts tell us al-Shabaab began the fighting and that the Kabalah alliance had the upper hand until late-morning. By late afternoon the tide appeared to have turned when al-Shabaab fighters received reinforcements from Merca and the Anole faction and some of Madobe's forces pulled out of the city. Despite the turn of events, local leaders and elders in Lower Juba appeared encouraged. Multiple Juba contacts told us the wider community is buoyed; even if Madobe does not immediately consolidate control of Kismayo. Several contacts also opine that the days events in Kismayo will create greater tension throughout the country between Hisbul Islam and al-Shabaab. A Lower Juba clan ugas told us that he thinks the local community will assist Madobe with clan militia and ammunition. A Juba business figure close to Madobe told us the local Afmadow community as of late afternoon October 1 was sending reinforcements. Minister of Security Sanboloshi told us 10 - 15 al-Shabaab technicals left Mogadishu for Kismayo on October 1 and that he and the Prime Minister and AMISOM were discussing ways to take advantage of the situation in Mogadishu. The situation in Lower Juba remains highly fluid. We assess that it is highly unlikely Madobe will settle for al-Shabaab control of Kismayo and will most likely make another push for the city, if ultimately pushed out during this first round of fighting. We are strongly encouraging the TFG to take immediate action in Mogadishu to take advantage of al-Shabaab's redeployment south to Kismayo. End summary.

¶2. (C) On the morning of October 1 heavy fighting broke out between Ahmed Madobe's Darod/Kabalah alliance and al-Shabaab militia in Kismayo. (Note: Madobe's alliance, with no apparent assistance from Kenya, on September 25 moved into Kismayo causing al-Shabaab militia to either flee Kismayo or consolidate around key checkpoints in the city. Madobe and Shukri in recent months have been in quiet and complicated negotiations with the TFG, and Madobe has largely supplanted Hassan al-Turki as leader of the predominately Ogaden-clan led Ras Kamponi brigades. End note.) Fighting began around 7 a.m. (local) in the northern part of the city but eventually spread to other parts of the town. Our contacts tell us al-Shabaab began the fighting and the Kabalah alliance had the upper hand until late-morning. By late

afternoon the tide appeared to have turned when al-Shabaab fighters received reinforcements from Merca and the Anole faction, and some of Madobe's forces pulled out of the city. (Note: The Anole faction is a predominately Darod/Kabalah/Harti militia. End note.) However, our contacts told us the Anole faction as of 5 p.m. (local) were awaiting reinforcements and that many other Darod/Kabalah forces continued fighting in the town. According to a contact close to Madobe, Madobe intends to continue the push against al-Shabaab, even if he loses this round of fighting. However, the contact thought a second round of fighting could take a few days or even weeks to begin.

¶3. (C) Despite the turn of events later in the day, by early evening on October 1, local leaders and elders in Lower Juba appeared encouraged. Multiple contacts told us the wider community is buoyed by the fact that al-Shabaab has been weakened and pushed out of other towns in Lower Juba, even if Madobe does not immediately consolidate control of Kismayo. (Note: Several contacts also opine that the days events in Kismayo will create greater tension throughout the country between Hisbul Islam and al-Shabaab. End note.) A Lower Juba clan ugas told us that he thinks the local community will assist Madobe with clan militia and ammunition. A Juba business figure close to Madobe told us the local Afmadow community as of late afternoon October 1 was sending reinforcements. (Note: The Somalia Unit does not think the TFG can project force into Lower Juba. End note.) Juba Resistance Movement (JRM) Chairman Mohamed Amin, a previously hesitant ally of Madobe, on October 1 sent Somalia Unit a letter stating the group's position. The letter stated that the JRM welcomed a change of leadership in Kismayo and

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supported Madobe's efforts. The document also said Madobe, in consultation with the JRM, local community leaders, and clan elders, had agreed a takeover of Kismayo would be followed by the establishment of a local administration.

¶4. (C) A business contact close to President Sharif in the U.S. and Sharif said he would contact the Prime Minister and might possibly be able to send reinforcements from Mogadishu. Minister of Security Sanboloshi told us 10 - 15 al-Shabaab technicals left Mogadishu for Kismayo on October 1 and that he and the Prime Minister and AMISOM were discussing ways to take advantage of the situation in Mogadishu. According to Sanbaloshi, the TFG on October 1 was in direct talks with Madobe who told the TFG he supported it but said he could not make such an announcement while still fighting for the city.

¶5. (C) Comment: The situation in Lower Juba remains highly fluid. We are strongly encouraging the TFG to immediately take advantage of al-Shabaab's redeployment from Mogadishu. We think that it is highly unlikely Madobe will settle for al-Shabaab control of Kismayo and will most likely make another push for the city if he is ultimately repulsed during this first round of fighting. The apparent groundswell of support for the Kabalah alliance in Lower Juba could wane if the local population perceived the Kabalah alliance to be losing ground. For the moment,, there is a great opportunity for the TFG and aligned or sympathetic forces throughout the country to take advantage of growing tensions between Hisbul Islam and al-Shabaab.

RANNEBERGER